



Alliance for Arts Education, Artists, Volunteers and Cultural Advocacy

www.ArtServeMichigan.org

January 17, 2006

The Honorable Brian Palmer
State Representative
PO Box 30014
Lansing 48909

Dear Representative Palmer:

ArtServe Michigan applauds the efforts of the Michigan Legislature to bring our state into the forefront of educational reform and we support the development of a state curriculum that specifies threshold content, scope, and sequence to prepare Michigan's high school students not only for college and the work force, but also for meaningful lives as broadly educated citizens and life-long learners.

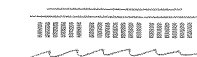
The Goals 2000: Educate America Act acknowledges the arts as a core subject, as important to education as English, mathematics, history, civics and government, geography, science, and foreign languages. New Michigan curriculum guidelines should reflect this enlightened perspective. Consequently, we advocate dance, music, theatre, and visual art as required components of school instruction and call for at least one credit in the fine arts as a Michigan high school graduation requirement.

Our education system can't afford to have a requirement that only addresses part of our students' academic future. The proposed State Board of Education Merit Core Curriculum ensures that every student in the State of Michigan receives a complete education.

Thirty-six states and the District of Columbia have established a fine arts (visual and performing arts) requirement for high school graduation. Two other states have broader requirements that include the fine arts. Only Michigan and eleven other states (Alaska, Colorado, Delaware, Iowa, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Nebraska, New Mexico, North Dakota, South Carolina, Wisconsin, and Wyoming) do not require achievement in the arts at the high school level.

The Consortium of National Arts Education Associations notes "all peoples, everywhere, have an abiding need for meaning—to connect time and space, experience and event, body and spirit, intellect and emotion. People create art to make these connections, to express the otherwise inexpressible." We agree with the Consortium that "all students deserve access to the rich education and understanding that the arts provide, regardless of their background, talents, or disabilities. In an increasingly technological environment overloaded with sensory data, the ability to perceive, interpret, understand, and evaluate such stimuli is critical.

Metro Detroit Office • 17515 West Nine Mile Road Suite 1025 • Southfield MI 48075-4426 • 248.557.8288 • 248.557.8581 fax
Lansing Office • 1310 Turner Suite C • Lansing, MI 48906 • 517.371.7029 • 517.371.1743 fax



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The arts help all students to develop multiple capabilities for understanding and deciphering an image- and symbol-laden world. Thus, the arts should be an integral part of a program of general education for all students."

An arts education is a key component of a complete educational experience for our children, building skills such as creative thinking, spatial reasoning, problem-solving and critical thinking, adding to overall academic achievement and school success.

A recent national study by the RAND Corporation found that 70% of the public wants more arts education in the schools. 75% reported enjoying artistic activities as much as adults as they did as children. Additionally, 70% of Americans say they strongly believe that arts and cultural activities help to spark their imagination.

We encourage the Michigan Legislature to continue its efforts to improve and bring consistency to high school curricular requirements. Additionally, we call for a statewide commitment to providing the conditions necessary to achieve the Michigan Arts Education Content Standards and Benchmarks by establishing a fine arts high school graduation requirement.

ArtServe Michigan is willing to provide any additional information or testimony necessary to support this initiative. Please call on us if we can contribute to your deliberations.

Again, we strongly urge you to support the proposed Michigan Merit Core Curriculum, which includes one credit of visual or performing arts for high school graduation.

Sincerely,



Drew Buchholz
ArtServe Michigan

cc: House Education Committee